DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 299 221 SO 019 545

AUTHOR Sesow, F. W.; VanCleaf, David
TITLE Social Studies and Youth Organizations: Partners in the Development of Civic Responsibility and Action.
PUB DATE [88]
NOTE 13p.; Based on a paper presented at a Meeting of the National Council for the Social Studies (Chicago, IL, November 1985).
PUB TYPE Viewpoints (120) -- Reports - Descriptive (141) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Citizen Participation; *Citizenship Education; Elementary Secondary Education; Social Responsibility; *Social Studies; Youth; *Youth Agencies; *Youth Clubs; Youth Programs
IDENTIFIERS 4 H Clubs; Boy Scouts of America; Girl Scouts of the USA; National Council for the Social Studies; Young Mens Christian Association

ABSTRACT

Social studies education programs should help students acquire skills and knowledge related to good citizenship, ensure that students apply these skills and knowledge to active civic participation, and promote standards of behavior and values that are also nurtured and developed in non-school settings. Children learn these in school and non-school environments through membership, participation, and interaction. The major goals of the 4-H Clubs, the Young Mens Christian Association (YMCA), the Boy Scouts, and the Girl Scouts are compared to the National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS) three democratic principles of equal protection, due process, and citizen participation and eight stated values of justice, equality, responsibility, rule of law, freedom, diversity, privacy, and human rights. With some concepts, such as citizenship participation and responsibility, considerable goal overlap is evident, while other concepts, such as due process, freedom, and privacy, have little or no goal overlap. Teachers and school administrators should recognize contributions of the major non-school youth organizations toward the attainment of educational goals, and schools should form partnerships with leaders of these groups in order to identify, develop, and implement common goals. A comparative goals chart is included. (JHP)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED299221

SOCIAL STUDIES AND YOUTH ORGANIZATIONS: PARTNERS IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF CIVIC RESPONSIBILITY AND ACTION

BY

F. WM. SESOW AND DAVID VANCLEAF

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

F. WM. SESOW

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☑ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

University of Nebraska-Lincoln
108 Henzlik Hall
Lincoln, Nebraska 68588

SO 019 545

SOCIAL STUDIES AND YOUTH ORGANIZATIONS: PARTNERS IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF CIVIC RESPONSIBILITY AND ACTION

Introduction

Civic responsibility and action is a major concern of the social studies and has been well documented in professional literature since the first meeting of the National Council for the Social Studies in 1935. More recently, the 1981 "Essentials of the Social Studies" statement reflects a continuing concern for civic responsibility and action throughout with an entire section devoted to civic action. According to this statement, social studies programs must not only help students acquire the skills and knowledge related to good citizenship, but must also ensure that students apply citizenship skills and knowledge through active participation in civic life. Thus, the ultimate significance of social studies rests with students' ability to enhance the future of our society through active participation.[1]

In 1983 the National Council for the Social Studies Task Force on Scope and Sequence reaffirmed the council's commitment to civic education, but also noted the importance of contributions to students' civic development by nonschool youth organizations. The Task Force report stated that while the schools' social studies programs are responsible for promoting citizenship education, "all agencies and institutions that work with young people share in the responsibility for citizenship education".[2]

William Bennett, Secretary of Education, released a 1986 report regarding the status of elementary education in America. His report made numerous references to the need to focus on citizenship development. The report referred to a concept Bennett called "the community of adults". This community

shares responsibility with the schools for the development and education of the coming generation".[3]

A common set of core democratic values exist and provide standards governing behavior. These standards are within the scope of the schools' responsibility, but they are also nurtured and developed in nonschool settings. This article describes the goals of four youth agencies as those goals relate to the NCSS goals.

The Child's Learning Environments

In considering how children acquire and develop the skills, knowledge, and values necessary for democratic citizenship, there is a need to examine the child's life beyond the walls of the school. Sesow has suggested a model for considering learning that takes place in environments other than school.[4] The model proposes that children acquire and apply skills, knowledge, and values in their school and nonschool environments through their interactions, participation, and membership in each context.

Children are members of various groups such as family, community, church, school, and organizations specifically designed to serve youth. Four of the more popular youth groups in terms of membership are 4-H, Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts and the YMCA. In 1983, a total of 4,657,784 youth ages 9 to 19 participated in at least one 4-H program.[5] The Boy Scouts of America serve 3,567,199 male youth through their programs.[6] Each year the YMCA serves about 12 million Americans through a variety of progams.[7]

Citizenship Goals and Youth Organizations

The National Council for the Social Studies outlined eight values related to the three basic democratic principles of equal protection, due process and citizenship participation. The eight values are: justice, equality, responsibility, rule of law, freedom, diversity, privacy and human rights.[8] An examination of the purposes, aims, goals and activities of youth organizations reveal that their purposes are compatible with the purposes of citizenship education professed by the National Council for the Social Studies. In this section the major goals of four youth organizations are described as they relate to the goals of NCSS.

4-H.

The 4-H organization was started at the turn of the century to supplement the school curriculum.[9] Although originally established to extend technical training in agriculture, 4-H groups currently serve youth in suburban and urban communities with programs not directly related to agriculture.

The 4-H national organization outlines eight goals, three of which relate specifically to NCSS citizenship goals.[10] The three goals related to citizenship education are:

- To strengthen the family and home through the attainment of knowledge, human skills, and technology needed to create a satisfying quality of life within available resources.

- To assist youth in acquiring knowledge, developing life skills, and forming attitudes that will enable them to become self-directing, productive, and contributing members of society.
- To strengthen the capacity of state and local governments to deal with public issues and problems.

Several activities of 4-H provide excellent vehicles for the attainment of their goals. In Utah youth have participated in citizenship and community involvement programs and a voter awareness program. 4-H clubs are awarded Citizenship-in-Action grants to encourage innovative citizenship and community involvement projects. 4-H clubs have also participated in Citizenship-Washington Focus, a citizenship and leadership program using the nation's capital as a classroom.

YMCA

The YMCA works toward four principles reflecting five fundamental values.[11] Two of the principles relate to the goals of NCSS: (1) A commitment to developing leadership qualities in youth, and (2) a commitment to building international understanding. The five fundamental values, each of which relate to NCSS goals, are:

- That each individual is a child of God and thus unique and worthy of respect.
- That each individual is responsible for his or her own life and actions.

- That living a full life means developing positive relationships with others, thus creating a sense of community among people.
- That this community, this association of people should try to serve the common needs of all, especially the needs of its weakest members.
- That equality and justice are concepts to be maintained and passed on from this generation to the next.

Local YMCA organizations are free to develop activities and programs to further these principles and values. The YMCA in Seattle has been recognized for implementing educational programs that examine current issues, training high school students to serve as deputy election registrars, training high school teachers to use mock trials, political role playing and current events to help maintain students' interest in constitutional matters.[12]

Girl Scouts

Girl Scouts U.S.A. is the largest voluntary organization for girls in the world. The Leader's Guide identifies four primary goals, each directly related to the goals, of NCSS.[13] They are:

1. Developing self-worth
2. Relating to others
3. Developing values
4. Contributing to the betterment of society

Based on the principle that individuals learn by making decisions, doing, and discovering, the Girl Scouts has integrated three specific components within the organizational structure of each troop. Each troop is organized

around the concepts of small groups, self-government, and girl-adult partnership. Through these structural concepts, girls learn to work with others, accept responsibility for personal behavior, develop a greater sense of self-worth, and they learn to take a more active role in their community.

Boy Scouts

The Boy Scouts of America has three basic aims.[14] First, scouting attempts to enhance a child's moral strength and character. The acquisition of appropriate personal values, personal qualities and a positive outlook are included within this aim. A second aim is citizenship and includes aspects such as interpersonal relationship skills and meeting one's obligations to others, society and government. The third aim relates to physical, mental and emotional fitness. Self-control, self-respect, a fit body, and the ability to solve problems underlie the third aim.

As with Girl Scouts, the aims and methods of Boy Scouts parallel and complement the civic and citizenship goals of NCSS. Also, Boy Scouts actively participate in programs and activities that nurture the acquisition of democratic values and beliefs.

Perhaps the strength of these out-of-school programs is their emphasis on active student involvement. While students read about democracy in school, they have little opportunity for actively experiencing democracy. Out-of-school programs, however, must actively involve children (or risk losing members).

Suggestions

The effectiveness of social studies instruction can be enhanced when teachers and curriculum planners develop a partnership with youth organizations. The suggestions that follow should be helpful to educators as they develop partnerships and thereby actively increase the effectiveness of social studies.

As a starting point, teachers will need to become aware of the nonschool activities of their students. More specifically, they should find out which youth organizations their students belong to. Even if only a limited number belong to organizations, teachers should help these students discover relationships between programs or activities of the respective youth organizations and the social studies curriculum of the school. Also, for those students that do not belong to a youth organization, it may be appropriate for the teacher to encourage a child's parents to consider having their child join a youth organization.

Prior to beginning a new unit of study teachers should tell students about the topic that they will be studying and solicit input from the students. Students could be asked to share their experiences through activities of youth groups that may be related to the topic to be studied. If appropriate, leaders of youth organizations might serve as resource people for the various topics included in the school's social studies program. As an example, the Boy Scouts of America have received significant recognition from United States Presidents. Presidents that have been directly involved in recognizing the Scouts include, Wilson, Truman, Kennedy, Carter and Reagan as well as several

others. Perhaps a local Scout leader could share this rich tradition as a resource person for a social studies class.

Most, if not all, youth organizations, are committed to the value of education and recognize a need to work closely with teachers and administrators of elementary and secondary schools. Therefore, it would appear, that meaningful partnerships can and should be created between teachers and leaders of youth organizations. Perhaps a major goal of the partnership should be to promote civic responsibility and action among the youth they serve.

Summary

The relationships between the purposes described by NCSS and the goals of the four youth groups are illustrated in Figure 1. In some areas, such as citizenship participation and responsibility, there is considerable overlap. In other areas, such as due process, freedom and privacy, little relationship exists. This illustration is admittedly superficial. We have not defined each term carefully, nor have we examined the values and concepts subsumed under the major goals of the four youth organizations. However, even this cursory view illustrates areas of shared concern.

Insert Figure 1 about here

Elementary and secondary school pupils are involved in a variety of non-school activities. A significant number belong to organizations such as 4-H, YMCA, Boy Scouts of America and Girl Scouts of America. Programs and

goals of these organizations contribute to civic responsibility and action. There appears to be a need for teachers and administrators to recognize the contributions that these organizations make toward the attainment of the educational goals of schools and to form a partnership with the leaders of these groups. Once partnerships have been formed, cooperative efforts in attaining common goals can be developed and implemented.

Notes

1. National Council for the Social Studies, "Essentials of the Social Studies," NCSS pamphlet, (1981).

2. National Council for the Social Studies, "In Search of a Scope and Sequence," Social Education, Vol. 48, No. 4 (April, 1984), p. 250.

3. William J. Bennett, First Lessons A Report On Elementary Education In America (U.S. Department of Education, Washington, DC, 1986), pp. 15-18.

4. F. Wm. Sesow, "The Many Learning Environments of Children," The Social Studies, Vol. 75, No. 6 (November/December, 1984), pp. 255-259.

5. United States Department of Agriculture, Leadership for Tomorrow 4-H Update (1984), pp. 11-34.

6. Boy Scouts of America, BSA at a Glance (A face sheet, Irving, Texas, 1984).

7. Young Men's Christian Association, Discovering the YMCA (National Council of Young Men's Christian Associations for the United States of America, Chicago, 1984).

8. National Council for the Social Studies, "Essential Characteristics of a Citizenship Education Program," Social Education (September/October, 1984) pp. 408-409.

9. Mary Conway Kohler, Edward L. Frickey and Dixie Lea, "Youth-serving Agencies as Educators," Education in School and Nonschool Settings (Eighty-fourth yearbook of the National Society for the Study of Education, Part I, Chicago, 1985) pp. 173-175.

10. United States Department of Agriculture, pp. 11-34.

11. Young Men's Christian Association, pp. 2-31.

12. Young Men's Christian Association, "A Healthy Constitution," Discovery YMCA (May/June, 1984), p. 28.

13. Girl Scouts United States of American, Worlds to Explore: Brownie and Junior Leaders' Guide (1981).

14. Boy Scouts of America, Boy Scout Program Helps 1984-1986 (Irving, Texas, 1985).

Figure 1

Relationship Between Purposes of Social Studies (NCSS)

and Youth Organizations

Purposes of Social Studies

NCSS	4-H	YMCA	Girl Scouts	Boy Scouts
Principles				
Equal Protection		- serve common needs of all	- develop values	- obligations to others
Due Process			- develop values	
Citizenship Participation	- create satisfying quality of life - strengthen capacity of governments - contributing members of society	- develop leadership qualities - creating a sense of community	- develop values - relate to others - contribute to betterment of society	- interpersonal relationship skills
Values				
Justice		- justice		
Equality		- positive relationship with others - equality		
Responsibility	- self-directing members of society	- individual responsibility	- self-worth	- moral character - obligations to others - self-control
Rule of Law				
Freedom				
Diversity		- international understanding		
Privacy				
Human rights		- individual respect - work for common needs of all		